

LARSON ANNOUNCES SUPPORT OF LEGISLATION TO PROTECT PUBLIC WATER SUPPLIES

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WASHINGTON, D.C.—U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) today announced that he is a cosponsor of H.R. 3178, the Water Infrastructure Security and Research Development Act, a bipartisan bill which was approved by the House Science Committee today. The bill authorizes the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to provide \$12 million a year for five years in funding to support research, development, and demonstration projects for the security of water infrastructure and drinking water supplies from contamination, including contamination that may be caused by acts of terrorism. The funding would provide research grants on how to prevent, detect, or respond to physical and cyber threats to our nation's water supply infrastructure.

Larson stated: "The water supply and infrastructure is among the most essential and valuable resources in every community in America. However, our public water supply is not immune to possible acts of terrorism, and this bill represents a critical step towards the long-term protection of water supply systems in our cities and towns. The bill would provide funding for government agencies to work in conjunction with universities, research foundations, and national laboratories to develop research and demonstration projects that would increase security of drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. Most importantly, we must utilize new technologies and safeguards to enhance the security of our public water supply. This legislation is an important compliment to a comprehensive counter terrorism and preparedness strategy that begins on the local and regional levels."

"The Metropolitan District (MDC) supports and appreciates Rep. Larson's efforts to secure federal funding related to the security of water infrastructure," said Anthony V. Milano, MDC Chief Executive Officer. "Since September 11, the MDC has been operating under a heightened sense of security and vigilance. This legislation is critical to the long-term operations and protection of our water supply," Mr. Milano said.

On November 14, the House Science Committee, which Larson sits on, heard testimony on the legislation from experts in the field of public safety and water supplies. The witnesses were Dr. Richard G. Luthy, a professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Stanford University; Jerry Johnson, General Manager of Washington, D.C.'s Water and Sewer Authority and representing the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies and the American Water Works; James Kallstrom, the Director of the New York State Office of Public Security; and Jeffrey Danneels, of the Security Systems and Technology Center, Sandia National Laboratories.

Mr. Kallstrom stated: "...Physical destruction of a drinking water or wastewater system could deprive a population of its essential water supply as well as causing serious secondary effects such as the inability to ensure sanitation or to provide fire protection to the affected population. Manufactures and other businesses similarly could be deprived of water, resulting in serious consequences for local economies."

Dr. Luthy stated: "Although recognized in the past, the vulnerability of our water systems to deliberate acts has not received sufficient attention. The reasons include the fact that simply developing and maintaining our existing water systems received primary attention." He also stated: "...designing effective solutions to key problems will require broad-based studies comprising university and governmental research establishments, professional organizations, practitioners, and operators as well as advice from groups like the National Research Council. The challenges are great, but so are the resources to make our water safer than ever before."

Mr. Danneels stated: "Improving security system effectiveness or reducing the consequences of an attack are the two most important ways to reduce water infrastructure risk. The ultimate goal of a water infrastructure security program is to make the water infrastructure an unattractive target for terrorism." He also stated: "In addition to the oft-mentioned chemical and biological contamination threats, water utility targets could include physical and cyber disruption of facilities resulting in long-term shortages or loss of public confidence."

Mr. Johnson stated: "In response to the September 11 terrorist attacks, water systems are actively upgrading their facilities to address security concerns. However, a substantial investment is needed for water infrastructure security research to develop new technologies and practices to address potential vulnerabilities at our nation's water systems."

The legislation has the support of the following organizations: the National Association of Counties, the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies, the Association of Metropolitan Sewer Agencies, the American Society of Civil Engineers, the Water Environment Foundation, the American Council of Engineering Companies, the National Society of Professional Engineers, the American Water Works Research Foundation and the Association of California Water Agencies.

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